

My name is Mande Seeley, and I live in Sisters. I am writing you today to urge you to pass a budget that invests in safe, stable, and affordable homes for all Oregonians. Like air to breathe and water to drink, housing is a basic human need.

My neighbors and community members in Sisters are struggling to pay their rent, mortgage, or find a safe, stable, or affordable home. We know that since the pandemic started, financial instability has only gotten worse. People have lost their jobs or loved ones, and are in the middle of making tough choices to stay afloat, such as borrowing money from family members, using credit cards to pay rent, selling personal belongings, or skipping meals.

Since moving to Oregon in 2016, my family has spent three of the last five years without housing due to the cost of living in my community, first in a tent and then in an RV in the forest. We have been housed for two months now thanks to one of only two affordable housing complexes here, but it's not enough. Without a home, you live in a constant state of survival mode, and everything else becomes harder. I've been turned down for a job because I didn't have a place to live, and even maintaining a job is difficult because you need a consistent place to get clean. Studies have also shown that it's cheaper to house folks than it is for them to stay houseless, and the pandemic is putting more people at risk of that every single day.

Every Oregonian deserves a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home, and no one should lose their home in the middle of a global pandemic. Please invest in housing opportunities and provide funding for emergency shelters and emergency rent assistance, to support youth who are experiencing homelessness with shelter and long-term rent assistance, to build more safe, stable, and affordable homes, and to help more people access homeownership.

Thank you for your time and service to the State of Oregon.